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Leza L Olson 09/18/2006 09:00:21 AM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

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S E C R E T TEL AVIV 003671

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2026
TAGS: PREL IS IR TC
SUBJECT: ISRAELI MFA DG'S VISIT TO ABU DHABI

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) MFA Deputy DG for Political Research (the Israeli equivalent to INR) Nimrod Barkan informed newly arrived Polcouns Sept. 13 that MFA Director General Aharon Abramovitch, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's close confidant, had just returned from a visit to Abu Dhabi, where he discussed the Iranian threat with senior UAE officials. Barkan noted that while there is an Israeli representative resident in Abu Dhabi, Abramovitch was the most senior Israeli official thus far to visit the UAE as far as he was aware. Barkan suggested that Abramovitch's visit marked a noteworthy step forward in Israel's relations with the UAE.

¶2. (S/NF) Barkan commented that the Emirati leadership was interested in Israeli views on means of deterring Iran and countering the Iranian nuclear threat. Barkan said that Abramovitch had gained the impression that the UAE was concerned that it could not rely solely on the U.S. over the long term in deterring Iran. Israel is also engaged in a dialogue on Iran with Qatar and Oman, he said.

¶3. (S/NF) Polcouns asked about Saudi Arabia, noting that based on his own experience in Riyadh from 1998 to 2001, King Abdullah was strongly attached to the Palestinian cause and therefore would likely be reluctant to engage Israel directly despite Saudi concerns about Iran. Barkan stated that an Israeli intelligence channel to Saudi intelligence had been established, but so far there was no direct political contact between Tel Aviv and Riyadh.

¶4. (C) Comment: In the past, MFA's Arab Affairs Department has been extremely sensitive about discussing Israeli contacts with the UAE with Embassy Tel Aviv, but Barkan appeared eager to inform Polcouns of Abramovitch's visit to Abu Dhabi as an indication of a growing Israeli security dialogue with the Gulf as a result of the Iranian threat. We welcome comments from our colleagues in the Gulf as to the significance of their host governments' dialogue with Israel.

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JONES